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# REWRITING FAMILY HISTORY: STRABO AND THE MITHRIDATIC WARS

INGER N. I. KUIN

## INTRODUCTION

STRABO OF AMASEIA LIVED in an era of radical transformation, from the mid-first century B.C.E. through the beginning of Tiberius' reign.<sup>1</sup> His only extant work, the *Geography*, chronicles the expansion of the *oikoumene*, the known and inhabited world, under Roman hegemony. Although it does not have a prominent place in the *Geography*, Strabo's own family history unfolds as a micro version of this master narrative. His ancestors belonged to the highest circles of the Pontic court, while Strabo himself moved successfully among the political elite at Rome. Strabo's father was born in the kingdom of Pontus, Strabo himself in the Roman province Bithynia-Pontus, newly created by Pompey the Great.

Efforts to establish the biography of the historical Strabo used to dominate the scholarship on the *Geography*. However, in her 1997 article "In Search of the Author of Strabo's *Geography*," Katherine Clarke reconciled Strabo the historical person with his literary project by arguing that the different facets of the man could be spatially mapped onto his narrative. The figure of Strabo encompasses his Pontic roots, his intellectual attachment to the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and his connections at Rome.<sup>2</sup> My article will be concerned with the first of these three areas.

I will investigate Strabo's presentation of the history of his family and of his ancestral city as an example of how an individual (Strabo) and a micro community (his family) situate their own narrative in a larger historical framework. In the first part of this article I discuss how Strabo presents the recent history of his home country Pontus and his hometown Amaseia to show the connections between this local history and the thrust of the work as a whole. Next, I discuss how Strabo's family history unfolds in the *Geography* over the course of several wars between Pontus and Rome. I suggest that Strabo based this narrative, at

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<sup>1</sup>I follow Potheary (1997: 245), who argues that Strabo may have been born any time between 65 and 50 B.C.E.; cf. Dueck 2000: 1–2. See also Clarke 1997: 99–108 for a detailed discussion of the debate over Strabo's precise dates.

<sup>2</sup>Clarke 1997: 109; cf. van der Vliet 2003: 270–271. On his Roman connections, see Dueck 2000: 85–96.

least in part, on accounts transmitted orally within his family.<sup>3</sup> In the third and last section I compare Strabo's account of his ancestor Dorylaos the Younger, a close friend of Mithridates Eupator, with evidence from other sources. This episode is central to understanding how the family and Strabo himself shaped the narrative of the events of the wars in light of their own experiences with Roman rule.

In my analysis of Strabo's family narratives I will be using the notion of "(re)anchoring identity." Some brief, preliminary remarks on both components of this concept are in order. The complexity of identity-terminology is a well-known issue, caused in large part by the wide variety of different functions and meanings attributed to it.<sup>4</sup> In this article "identity" is understood as a form of individual or collective self-understanding that can be based on many markers, including ethnicity, gender, religion, citizenship, political allegiance, and socio-economic status. Identity comes into play primarily when individuals or groups interact. It is context-dependent and flexible, but not purely representational: there is a connection to reality.<sup>5</sup>

Though it is now often used in conjunction with identity terminology, the concept of "anchoring" arose independently. As an analytical tool it first appeared in the work of Serge Moscovici. In his research on the reaction to psychoanalytic ideas in France in the 1950s he observed that different social groups anchored these concepts differently: while the "new" phenomenon of psychoanalysis was always classified by being connected to existing ideas, images, and traditions, which particular familiar elements were used for this practice depended on the social milieu in question.<sup>6</sup> Thus for Moscovici "anchoring" describes a representational tool for meeting the challenge of new fields of knowledge. In classical studies the concept of anchoring has recently been applied to the introduction of new fields of knowledge in antiquity, but also to innovations in technology and art.<sup>7</sup>

In speaking of "anchoring identity" Moscovici's "new field of knowledge" is replaced with a new or changed self-understanding that needs to be rooted in some way. "Anchoring identity" as a reflexive concept (meaning that individuals and groups anchor their own identities) is often used in research on modern immigrant communities, specifically with respect to connecting identity and cultural heritage in the diaspora.<sup>8</sup> Another application of "anchoring identity"

<sup>3</sup> Given the prominence of Strabo's ancestors at the Mithridatic court, they may have featured in some of his written sources as well.

<sup>4</sup> See Brubaker and Cooper 2000 for a critique of identity as an analytical tool.

<sup>5</sup> Elsner's (2001) account of Lucian's *De Dea Syria* is a good analysis of the intricacies of negotiating multiple identities in the Roman East.

<sup>6</sup> Moscovici 2008: 104–106; cf. Bauer and Gaskell 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Sluiter 2017.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Park 2007. Grzymala-Kazłowska (2016) proposes a theory of "social anchoring" in which she defines anchoring as "the process of finding significant references and grounded points which enable migrants to restore their socio-psychological stability in new life settings" (1134).

that will be very relevant for our investigation occurs in recent studies of amateur genealogy.<sup>9</sup> In a broad sense the desire to track down information about ancestors can be understood as a way of trying to anchor one's identity in the past. But the core activities of the practice of genealogy, as perceived by amateur genealogists themselves, appear to contribute particularly to identity-making and identity-anchoring, both for individuals and for families. One key activity mentioned in these studies was the creation, from scattered pieces of information, of attractive stories about ancestors that often aligned with the genealogist's own self-understanding; another central element was the telling and retelling of these stories to other family members.<sup>10</sup>

The position of Strabo's family changed radically in the first century B.C.E. I will suggest that Strabo's family narratives were informed by practices of telling and retelling family history, which are vital in times of transformation and crisis precisely because they allow the family, as individuals and as a micro community, to re-anchor their shared and individual identities. Placing powerful changes in a narrative that connects the past with the present is the first step towards coping with them.

#### STRABO'S PONTUS

The reader of the *Geography* does not find out that Strabo is from Amaseia in Pontus until the twelfth book (out of seventeen) of the work. His delay in presenting this autobiographical information—in contrast to Herodotus or Thucydides, who make themselves known in their introductions—was probably intentional, and in keeping with the relative anonymity of other authors of universal histories or geographies such as Diodorus and Polybius.<sup>11</sup> Most of the information about Strabo's ancestors is, logically, also located in Book 12, given the spatial organization of the work and the fact that his family was active in Pontus. Before turning to the political activities of his ancestors, however, I want to show how strongly Strabo himself and his literary project are imprinted on the geographical account of Pontus, which belies, in a sense, the intentional anonymity of the work.

Strabo opens his account of Pontus with Mithridates Eupator. He first describes the lands held by Mithridates when he became king, next the territories added to the kingdom by him, which extend “westward along the coast as far as Heracleia” (τὴν μέχρι Ἡρακλείας παραλίαν ἐπὶ τὰ δυσμικὰ μέρη) and “in the opposite direction up to Kolchis” (ἐπὶ δὲ τὰναντία μέχρι κολχίδος, 12.3.1). The emphasis is on the vast expanse of land commanded by Mithridates. In the next sentence Strabo turns to Pompey's defeat of Eupator, and his subsequent settlement of Pontus in the 60s:

<sup>9</sup> For example, Kramer 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Bottero 2015: 534–556.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke 1997: 94–98. It is possible that, like Herodotus and Thucydides, Strabo included an autobiographical account in the introduction to his *Histories*. On this issue, see below, 108.

And in fact this country was comprised within these boundaries when Pompey took it over, having overthrown Mithridates. The parts towards Armenia and those around Colchis he distributed to the dynasts that had fought on his side, but the remaining parts he divided into eleven city-states and added them to Bithynia, so that out of both a single province was formed.<sup>12</sup>

Pompey plays a large role in the *Geography*, and, correspondingly, he is prominent in the account of Pontus as well. Strabo continues to say that later “Roman rulers” divided Pontus differently on occasion, “liberating some [cities], putting others in the hands of rulers, and leaving yet others subject to the Roman people.”<sup>13</sup> It is striking that none of these Roman rulers are mentioned by name here.<sup>14</sup> Pompey, in Strabo’s telling, is the one who added Pontus to the Roman *oikoumene*; the later rearrangements are only of secondary importance.<sup>15</sup> A last detail in the passage that deserves mention is Strabo’s rather matter of fact statement that Bithynia and Pontus were combined into one province. Less than fifty years previously Eupator had fought Nicomedes III of Bithynia over control of Paphlagonia. In the 90s he took Bithynia and Paphlagonia from Nicomedes IV, which was the catalyst for the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War.<sup>16</sup> Pompey’s rearrangement of the region, as told by Strabo, made this recent history irrelevant: all are just one Roman province now.

The terms Pontus for the Black Sea region and *Pontici* for its inhabitants are Roman inventions. Stephen Mitchell (2002) has pointed out that these terms were never used before the second half of the first century B.C.E.: contemporary documents pertaining to Mithridates Eupator or his predecessors employed Cappadocia and Cappadocian instead. To Strabo and his family, then, not only was living in a Roman province new, even being a *Ponticus* was a recent change. Mitchell (2002: 48–51) also shows that Strabo and many later authors did use the terms Pontus and Pontic retrospectively of the Mithridatic court. In Strabo’s case this use of vocabulary can be understood as an example of anchoring identity. The new markers for his home country and his ethnic identity, by-products of Pompey’s creation of the province Pontus-Bithynia, are anachronistically attributed to the Mithridatic kings. Strabo’s rooting of this particular innovation in the past is a clear attempt to cope with these new names, by giving them a history. His anachronistic use of the term Pontus brings to the surface a

<sup>12</sup> 12.3.1: καὶ δὴ καὶ Πομπήιος καταλύσας ἐκείνον ἐν τούτοις τοῖς ὄροις οὖσαν τὴν χώραν ταύτην παρέλαβε· τὰ μὲν πρὸς Ἀρμενίαν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Κολχίδα τοῖς συναγωνισαμένοις δυνάσταις κατένευμε, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ εἰς ἑνδεκα πολιτείας διεῖλε καὶ τῇ Βιθυνίᾳ προσέθηκεν ὥστ’ ἐξ ἁμφοῖν ἐπαρχίαν γενέσθαι μίαν.

<sup>13</sup> 12.3.1: ὕστερον δ’ οἱ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμόνες ἄλλους καὶ ἄλλους ἐποίησαντο μερισμούς, βασιλέας τε καὶ δυνάστας καθιστάντες καὶ πόλεις τὰς μὲν ἐλευθεροῦντες τὰς δὲ ἐγχειρίζοντες τοῖς δυνάσταις τὰς δ’ ὑπὸ τῷ δήμῳ τῷ Ῥωμαίων ἐῶντες.

<sup>14</sup> But, compare 12.3.6 for Antony intervening in the political arrangements of Heracleia; in the account of Amisus in 12.3.14 Strabo mentions the consecutive interventions of Caesar, Antony, and Augustus.

<sup>15</sup> The lack of specificity Lindsay (2005: 194) criticizes Strabo for here is intentional.

<sup>16</sup> 12.3.40. Cf. Kallet-Marx 1995: 242–243, 250–260.

small part of something that, I will argue, is a larger and often implicit strategy on the author's part to connect his own circumstances and identity with the past in general, and with his family history in particular.

The importance of Pompey in Strabo's introduction to his chapter on Pontus, as well as the emphasis on the expansion of the known, unified world mirror on a small scale the literary project of the *Geography* as a whole. At Rome Pompey was seen as an embodiment of Rome's universalizing ambitions, and his large role throughout Strabo's universalizing work must be understood in this context.<sup>17</sup> Another way in which Strabo has written himself into the geography of Pontus is through his positioning of Amaseia, his hometown, in this section. The description of Amaseia is quite detailed and suggests some patriotic pride.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the city functions as a point of orientation throughout his account of Pontus: twice to describe the flow of the river Iris (12.3.15, 12.3.30), once to measure the distance between Cabeira and Magnopolis (12.3.30), and twice more to describe the layout of Phazemonitis (12.3.38). The effect of Strabo's using Amaseia in this way is a subtle form of spatial *deixis*. Although the author has not inserted himself explicitly in the narrative, he is still present, because the reader is prompted to survey the region from Strabo's point of view, which is centred in Amaseia.

In his description of Amaseia, Strabo emphasizes the city's beauty and its legacy as the seat of the Pontic court, and he mentions the palaces and rock-cut tombs—the latter are still visible today—of the Pontic kings (12.3.39).<sup>19</sup> Strabo then moves on to the recent history of Amaseia:

There are several demolished strongholds in my country and also much deserted land, because of the Mithridatic War. However, it is all well supplied with trees, on one hand, and, on the other, it affords pasturage for horses and is fit for the raising of other animals. As a whole it is it is beautifully suited to habitation. Amaseia was also given to kings, but it is now a province.<sup>20</sup>

One could read some irony into the juxtaposition of the destruction of the Mithridatic Wars with the alleged green emptiness of the landscape here, but the tone is difficult to judge. The elusive description of Amaseia's history after Mithridates resembles the opening of the description of Pontus. Amaseia was likely one of the eleven Pontic *politeiai* of the province Pontus-Bithynia mentioned in the opening,<sup>21</sup> but it is uncertain into which royal

<sup>17</sup> Clarke 1997: 106.

<sup>18</sup> Lindsay 2005: 186.

<sup>19</sup> The tombs must have belonged to the first five Pontic dynasts, before the court was transferred to Sinope in 184 B.C.E.: Str. 12.3.11 and Pol. 23.9.2–3; cf. Mitchell 2002: 54–56; Lindsay 2005: 194; Fleischer 2009; Marek 2010: 333–335.

<sup>20</sup> 12.3.39: ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐρύματα πλείω κατεσκαμμένα ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ χώρᾳ καὶ ἔρημος γῆ πολλὴ διὰ τὸν Μιθριδατικὸν πόλεμον. ἔστι μέντοι πᾶσα μὲν εὐδενδρὸς, ἡ δ' ἱππόβοτος καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θρέμμασι πρόσφορος· ἅπανα δ' οἰκήσιμος καλῶς. ἐδόθη δὲ καὶ ἡ Ἀμάσεια βασιλεῦσι, νῦν δ' ἐπαρχία ἐστὶ.

<sup>21</sup> Magie 1975: 370; Syme 1995: 114–115; Marek 2010: 366–367.

hands it passed afterwards.<sup>22</sup> Strabo's comment that Amaseia is now part of a province may refer to the city's incorporation into the Roman province of Pontus-Galaticus in 3 or 2 B.C.E.<sup>23</sup> Why Amaseia was reincorporated into a province remains unclear, and Strabo does not give any clues.<sup>24</sup> Again, Pompey's rearrangement stands as the defining moment; what happened after is less important.<sup>25</sup>

Scholars disagree about whether or not Pontus and the Pontic kings have a special position in the *Geography* on account of Strabo's own background.<sup>26</sup> The chapter on Pontus shows that, for the author, the story of his own country was inextricably bound up with the story of the expansion of the *oikoumene* and with his larger project of a universalizing geography. The prominent role of the Pontic kings in the *Geography* is difficult to separate from the fact that they indeed played an important part in the changes affecting the Mediterranean in the first century B.C.E., which drive Strabo's narrative. Strabo's account of Amaseia and Pontus unsentimentally shows the reader a region deeply impacted by war and given a new place in the world by the Romans, Pompey in particular.

#### FAMILY HISTORY

I now turn to Strabo's description of the political activities of his ancestors (see fig. 1, below, for a family tree). We will be concerned with his maternal family, because his paternal family does not feature at all in the *Geography*. Perhaps there was simply not much to say.<sup>27</sup> Strabo's lost *Histories*, which

<sup>22</sup> Syme (1995: 295–299) suggests that Octavian may have given Amaseia to Polemo after the battle of Actium, or to Lycomedes, ruler and priest of Comana. Magie (1975: 435) writes that Antony already gave Amaseia to Polemo. Marek (2010: 384–385) has Antony give central Pontus to Dareius, the grandson of Eupator, but writes that the triumvirs gave it to Polemo in 37/36 B.C.E. when Dareius fell out of favour. After Polemo's death in 8 B.C.E. Amaseia would have passed to Pythodoris.

<sup>23</sup> Numismatic evidence indicates that the origins of Amaseia, along with nearby Sebastopolis, date to this time: Anderson 1923: 8; cf. Magie 1975: 466, 1329; Syme 1995: 295–301; Mitchell 1993: 94; Marek 2010: 405. On the relevant coins, see Marek 1993: 57.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the ruling monarch died or, perhaps, the Romans just seized the territory. Pythodoris, in any case, was still alive at the time; Syme 1995: 297, n. 51.

<sup>25</sup> I follow Dueck's (2000: 145–155) dating of 18–24 C.E. for the composition of the *Geography*; this means that Strabo, if he had wanted to, could have included further details on the political arrangements at Amaseia after Pompey.

<sup>26</sup> Clarke (1997: 99, 103–104), arguing primarily against Pais's idea (1908) that Strabo held a post at Pythodoris' court, rejects a special connection. More recently, without going as far as Pais, scholars have reaffirmed the prominence of Pontus (and Asia Minor) and the Pontic kings in Strabo: see Bowersock 2000: 15–24; Desideri 2000; Lindsay 2005; Braund 2005: 221–234; Engels 2005. For an updated view of Strabo's depiction of Pythodoris from a gender studies perspective, see Konstan 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Dueck 2000: 6. Strabo's father, though not mentioned by the author, may have been the Servilius Strabo mentioned favorably by Cicero in Letter 138 (Ed. Shackleton-Bailey, 1977) = 13.64, cf. Cassia 2000: 220–222; Potthecary 2016: 217–218.

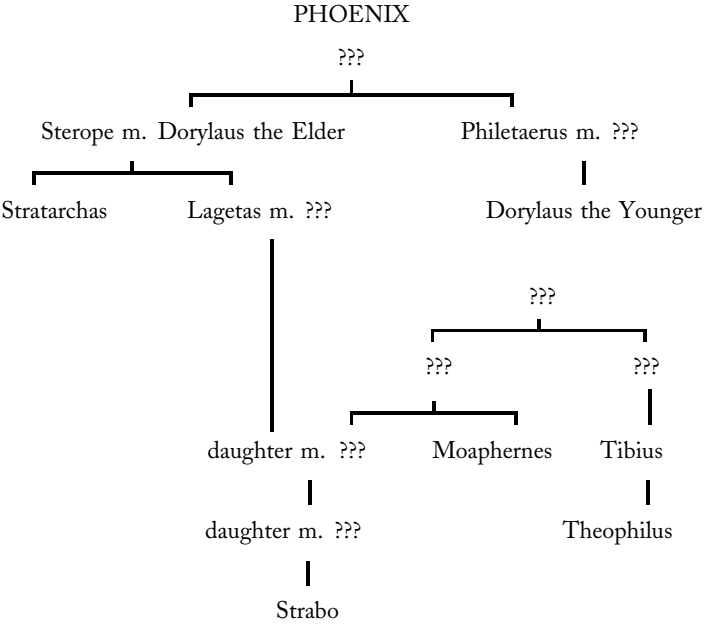


Figure 1. Strabo's family

covered the second half of the second century B.C.E. through at least 37 B.C.E. (*BNJ* 91 F18), may have contained more information about his family, possibly even about the paternal side.<sup>28</sup> The few remaining fragments do not contain any references to his ancestors, but from this we can draw no conclusions. Yet, even if Strabo's *Histories* contained additional details about his family, one would expect such an account to align roughly with what he writes in the *Geography*.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Geography* Strabo discusses his ancestors on his mother's side in Books 10 and 12. Their life stories are embedded in the accounts of the relevant locations, Crete and Pontus respectively. Having discussed the myths and history of Cnossos, Strabo turns to his family's connections with the place: "We are no stranger to the city, but owing to the vicissitudes and fortunes of human affairs the previous connections between us and the city have come to an end (10.4.10)."<sup>30</sup> He then proceeds to introduce Dorylaus, his great-great-grandfather on his mother's side and the ear-

<sup>28</sup> Biffi 2010: 104.

<sup>29</sup> For the fragments of the *Histories*, see Roller 2008.

<sup>30</sup> 10.4.10: περὶ μὲν οὖν Κνωσσοῦ ταῦτα, πόλεως οὐκ ἀλλοτρίας ἡμῖν, διὰ δὲ τὰνθρώπινα καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς μεταβολὰς καὶ συντυχίας ἐκλειμμένων τῶν συμβολαίων τῶν ὑπαρξάντων ἡμῖν πρὸς τὴν πόλιν. The pronoun ἡμεῖς in Strabo typically refers to him individually or to his generation more broadly; Clarke 1997: 107–108; 1999: 281–293; Potheary 1997. In this particular context, however, it most likely refers to him and his family.



liest relative Strabo includes in the *Geography*. He was a “friend” (φίλος) of Mithridates Euergetes, and a “man of tactics” (ἀνὴρ τακτικός, 10.4.10). Euergetes employed him to enlist foreign soldiers, which led Dorylaeus to many places, including Crete. When a war happened to break out between the Cnossians and Gortynians while he was there, the former appointed him general, and, after he finished the war speedily, gave him the greatest honours. When news reached Dorylaeus of the murder of Euergetes in Sinope, he decided to stay in Cnossos. He married and had three children: two sons, Laetas and Stratarchas, and a daughter. Laetas was Strabo’s great-grandfather, but he mentions only having met Stratarchas (10.4.10).<sup>31</sup>

The reason why Strabo’s family did not stay in Cnossos is Dorylaeus the Younger, Strabo’s most interesting relative. Dorylaeus the great-great-grandfather had a brother, Philetaerus, and Dorylaeus the Younger was his son. For reasons that are not explained this Dorylaeus the Younger grew up at the Pontic court as a foster-brother (σύντροφος, 10.4.10) to Mithridates Eupator, who would be the successor to Euergetes. Once he ascended to the throne Eupator did not forget his childhood companion; on the contrary, “he was so pleased with the friendship with Dorylaeus that he not only conferred upon him the greatest honours, but also cared for his relatives and sent for those who lived at Cnossos.”<sup>32</sup> Dorylaeus the Elder had by now passed away, but his son Laetas and his family moved back to Pontus.<sup>33</sup> Just as it had been during the generation of Dorylaeus the Elder, Strabo’s family was now once again closely associated with the Pontic king.

The position of Dorylaeus the Younger at the court of Mithridates Eupator is confirmed by his inclusion in the *heroon* of the king on Delos. An inscription has survived, which would have been installed underneath a portrait medallion of him, naming Dorylaeus the Younger indeed as σύντροφος of Mithridates Eupator. The text, dated to around 100 B.C.E., describes him also as the king’s military secretary and a senior commander.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Potthecary 2011: 42–44.

<sup>32</sup> 10.4.10: ἀνδρωθεὶς δ’ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τοσούτῳ ἦρητο τῇ συντροφίᾳ τῇ πρὸς τὸν Δορύλαον ὅστ’ οὐκ ἐκείνον μόνον εἰς τιμὰς ἤγε τὰς μεγίστας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν συγγενῶν ἐπαμελείτο καὶ τοὺς ἐν Κνωσσῷ μετεπέμπετο.

<sup>33</sup> I follow Potthecary (2011: 43) in understanding Laetas and his family here, rather than Laetas and Stratarchas, as Radt (2008: 2011) does; cf. Biffi 2010: 31. The Greek remains ambiguous, however: even though Strabo writes only that Laetas and those around him returned, he may well have meant that both brothers and their respective families went back to Pontus.

<sup>34</sup> ID 1572 = PH64008 = OGIS 372: Δορύλαον Φιλεταίρου Ἀμισηνόν / τὸν σύντροφον καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ / ἐγχειριδίου, τεταγμένον δὲ / καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δυνάμεων βασιλεύος / Μιθραδάτου Εὐπάτορος ὁ ἱερεὺς / Ἠλιάνας Ἀσκληπιοδώρου / Ἀθηναῖος θεοῖς (“For Dorylaeus of Amisus, son of Philetaerus, foster-brother and chief of the bodyguard and supreme commander of king Mithridates Eupator. The priest Helianax, son of Asclepiodorus, the Athenian has set this up for the gods”); cf. Chapouthier 1935: 29–34; McGing 1986: 91; Engels 1999: 19–20; Kreuz 2009: 134–137. The

In Strabo's excursus about why they no longer have ties to Cnossos, the fate of the family changes quickly, and again Dorylaeus the Younger is the cause. Immediately after the passage just cited Strabo adds:

Now as long as he (Dorylaeus) prospered, these others shared in his prosperity, but when he was ruined, for he was caught trying to cause the kingdom to revolt to the Romans on the understanding that he was to be established as ruler, their fortunes were also ruined at the same time, and they were reduced to humility.<sup>35</sup>

While the murder of Euergetes prevented the generation of Dorylaeus the Elder from returning to Pontus, on this occasion the contemporaries of Dorylaeus the Younger were swept up in his failed attempt at desertion during the First Mithridatic War. Strabo's narrative shows how the fortunes of his family changed often and rapidly on account of the larger political developments of the day. Dorylaeus the Younger, fearing perhaps that Eupator could not defeat the Romans, decided to seize the opportunity to try to become ruler of Pontus himself, even if this meant collaborating with the enemy.

Strabo returns to the story of the failed desertion of Dorylaeus the Younger in his discussion of Comana in Pontus in Book 12, because in better times Dorylaeus had served as priest there. Comana was the most important sanctuary for the Mithridatic court and Strabo underlines once again how steeply Dorylaeus fell from grace, and how greatly this impacted his family.<sup>36</sup> But Strabo has another reason for retelling the story of Dorylaeus the Younger in this particular chapter as well, namely the fact that he was not the only family member with Roman sympathies. Strabo goes on to describe the vicissitudes of the generation of his grandfather:

But long afterwards (i.e., after Dorylaeus the Younger's desertion) Moaphernes, my mother's uncle, came into distinction just before the dissolution of the kingdom. Again they were unfortunate along with the king, both Moaphernes and his relatives,<sup>37</sup> except some who revolted from the king beforehand, as did my maternal grandfather.<sup>38</sup> Seeing

translation of ἐπὶ τοῦ / ἐγχειριδίου is difficult. Engels has "Kriegsminister," McGing "chief of the bodyguard."

<sup>35</sup> 10.4.10: εὐτυχοῦντος μὲν δὴ ἐκείνου συνευτυχεῖν καὶ τούτοις συνέβαινε, καταλυθέντος δὲ, ἐφωράθη γὰρ ἀφιστὰς τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τὴν βασιλείαν ἐφ' ᾧ αὐτὸς εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν καταστήσεται, συγκατελύθη καὶ τὰ τούτων καὶ ἐταπεινώθησαν. Some argue that ἐκείνου refers to Lagetas: see, for example, Jones 1928: 135; Engels 1999: 20; Roller 2014: 4. I follow those who take ἐκείνου as referring to Dorylaeus the Younger. He is the protagonist of this section and his deeds are also described in 12.3.33 (see below, n. 36) in almost exactly the same words, accompanied by Strabo's comment that he has already discussed the same story earlier; cf. Dueck 2000: 5–7, 188, n. 13; Cassia 2000: 217; Panichi 2005: 209; Biffi 2010: 31. Radt (2008) does not comment on this issue.

<sup>36</sup> 12.3.33: ἐφωράθη τὴν βασιλείαν ἀφιστὰς Ῥωμαίοις, καταλυθέντος δ' ἐκείνου συνδιεβλήθη καὶ τὸ γένος.

<sup>37</sup> Moaphernes served Eupator as governor of Colchis (11.2.18); cf. McGing 1986: 59.

<sup>38</sup> I follow Radt's (2008: 392–393) text here: ὁ πάππος ἡμῶν ὁ πρὸς πατρὸς αὐτῆς. Hence, the passage concerns Strabo's maternal grandfather, not his paternal grandfather; cf. Biffi 2010: 34–35.

that the king was doing badly in the war with Lucullus, and at the same time being alienated from him out of wrath at his recently having put to death his cousin Tibius and Tibius' son Theophilus, he set out to avenge both them and himself. Taking pledges from Lucullus, he caused fifteen garrisons to revolt to him.<sup>39</sup>

During the Third Mithridatic War, then, a split occurred in Strabo's family in terms of their loyalties: some family members stuck with Eupator until the end, while some, including Strabo's maternal grandfather, thought it safer to go over to the Romans when they still could.

What does Strabo mean when he says that his family "again" was unfortunate along with the king? One cannot really say that Dorylaeus the Younger was unfortunate "with" the king; only that Strabo's family was unfortunate with Dorylaeus. It is also possible that Strabo is asking the reader to think all the way back to Dorylaeus the Elder, who had to stay in Crete after his king, Euergetes, was murdered. Strabo refrains from explicitly judging his ancestors for choosing one course of action over another, even if he does seem to make an effort to explain his grandfather's decision to desert Mithridates. If one understands "again" as referring to Dorylaeus the Elder, it would remind the reader that steadfast loyalty to the king can be harmful to family interests. In the case of Strabo's grandfather this motivation was compounded by his anger over the death of his cousin.

After the end of the Third Mithridatic War, Strabo's grandfather did not receive the rewards promised to him by Lucullus. Strabo explains that, because Pompey had taken over the war, the Senate would not ratify the honours Lucullus had pledged. He writes: "It was unjust, it was said, when one man had concluded the war successfully, that the prizes and the distribution of the rewards should fall to another man."<sup>40</sup> Strabo seems to acquiesce in this unfair outcome for his grandfather. As with the family members who stayed loyal to Mithridates, the grandfather's stock declined along with the position of Lucullus. In the previous section we saw that Strabo, in his account of Pontus, showed how his home country was swept up in the large-scale historical developments of the

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πατρός must be understood either as dittography for πρός or as an addition from a reader who was confused by seeing αὐτῆς instead of πατρός or μητρός; cf. Cassia 2000: 218–219.

<sup>39</sup> 12.3.33: ὄψε δὲ Μοαφέρνης ὁ θεῖος τῆς μητρὸς ἡμῶν εἰς ἐπιφάνειαν ἦλθεν ἤδη πρὸς καταλύσει τῆς βασιλείας, καὶ πάλιν τῷ βασιλεῖ συνητύχησαν καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ ἐκείνου φίλοι, πλὴν εἴ τινας ἔφθισαν προαποστάντες αὐτοῦ, καθάπερ ὁ πάππος ἡμῶν ὁ πρὸς αὐτῆς, δὲ ἰδὼν τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως κακῶς φερόμενα ἐν τῷ πρὸς Λευκόλλων πολέμῳ, καὶ ἅμα ἡλλοτριωμένος αὐτοῦ δι' ὀργήν, ὅτι ἀνεψιὸν αὐτοῦ Τίβιον καὶ υἱὸν ἐκείνου Θεόφιλον ἐτύγγανεν ἀπεκτονῶς νεωστὶ, ὥρμησε τιμωρεῖν ἐκείνοις τε καὶ ἑαυτῷ, καὶ λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ Λευκόλλου πίστει ἀφίστησιν αὐτῷ πεντεκαίδεκα φρούρια.

<sup>40</sup> 12.3.33: ἄδικον γὰρ εἶναι κατορθώσαντος ἑτέρου τὸν πόλεμον τὰ βραβεῖα ἐπ' ἄλλω γενέσθαι καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀριστείων διανομήν.

first century B.C.E. His stories of the political entanglements of his ancestors suggest that the same was true for his family.

#### REWRITING DORYLAUS THE YOUNGER

We now return to Strabo's account of Dorylaus the Younger. As we have seen, Strabo mentions the desertion of this Dorylaus from Eupator twice, in 10.4.10 and 12.3.33. What he does not mention, however, is what happened to Dorylaus after his defection. Was he executed by Mithridates, or did he go into exile? Precisely how problematic this omission is will become clear when we look at the evidence for the life of Dorylaus the Younger from other sources.

Several other authors mention Dorylaus in their accounts of the First Mithridatic War. Plutarch writes that Dorylaus occupied Boeotia with 80,000 men, and disagreed with Mithridates' general Archelaus over the best strategy to fight the Romans: Dorylaus wanted to attack Sulla right away, Archelaus wanted to wait. Archelaus won the argument, but, of course, not the battle.<sup>41</sup> Appian confirms Plutarch's account, writing that Dorylaus led 80,000 men to Greece just prior to the battle of Orchomenus, but he does not include Dorylaus' conflict with Archelaus (*Mithridatic Wars* 49). Appian had already mentioned Dorylaus earlier, as the leader of the phalanx in the battle between Nicomedes IV and Eupator by the river Amnias at the beginning of the war (*Mithridatic Wars* 17). Strikingly, the phalanx fell behind and never even engaged in battle (*Mithridatic Wars* 18). Even though Appian does not say so explicitly, it seems that Dorylaus did not do well in this first engagement. Memnon, finally, writes that Dorylaus also served as a general for Mithridates in Chios in the First Mithridatic War. He seized the city in punishment for their collaboration with the Rhodians against Mithridates (*BNJ* 434 F1.23). Memnon's account seems to contradict Appian, who has Zenobius capture Chios instead (*Mithridatic Wars* 46–47), but perhaps both men played a role in bringing the city under control.<sup>42</sup>

The most striking feature of these passages is what they do not mention: none of these authors comments on Dorylaus' desertion. Strabo himself does not give any information about the circumstances of Dorylaus' defection, but his remark that the events of the Third Mithridatic War occurred "long afterwards" (ὀψὲ, 12.3.33) suggests that it took place at the time of the First Mithridatic War. It is therefore puzzling, to say the least, that several authors in describing Dorylaus' activities during the First Mithridatic War omit this important information. Nonetheless, these sources do not actually contradict Strabo's account, and they

<sup>41</sup> *Sulla* 20.2–3. Plutarch uses this passage to foreshadow Archelaus' later, successful defection from Eupator. He has Dorylaus say that they could not have lost the previous battle so badly "without treachery" (ἀνευ προδοσίας). McGing's (1986: 159) interpretation that Dorylaus somehow felt that Archelaus was going to betray Eupator is too good to be true, and does not take into account that Plutarch is writing with the benefit of hindsight.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. McGing 1986: 127, n. 176. Cassia (2000: 212) notes the contradiction, but does not prefer either account. Keaveney and Madden (2011) dismiss Memnon.

corroborate the picture we have formed of Dorylaus as one of the most powerful men at the court of Eupator.

Plutarch mentions Dorylaus again, and this time in a way that is far more problematic for Strabo's narrative. In his *Lucullus* Plutarch places Dorylaus at Cabeira during the Third Mithridatic War. In 71 B.C.E., following a defeat, Mithridates' men lose faith in their king and get ready to leave. When the king's companions try to escape before the soldiers, a stampede ensues. Plutarch describes the scene as follows:

But when men around the king tried to first send away their own baggage quietly, and hindered the rest from going, the soldiers at once got angry. Pushing and forcing their way to the exits of the camp, they plundered the baggage and slew these men. There it was that Dorylaus, the general, with nothing on him but his purple robe, lost his life for a garment!<sup>43</sup>

How could Dorylaus possibly have served Mithridates at Cabeira in 71 B.C.E.? If he was, as Strabo writes, caught trying to defect to the Romans in the First Mithridatic War, it seems highly unlikely that he would still be alive fifteen years later, let alone serve as general for Eupator. Appian describes how some of the king's close friends from Lesbos and Smyrna were caught plotting against Eupator. One of them informed on the others and the conspirators were tortured and executed (*Mithridatic Wars* 48). If Eupator indeed caught his own foster brother trying to revolt, he would surely have inflicted a similar fate.

Scholars have tried to solve the contradiction between Strabo's biography of Dorylaus and that of Plutarch in several ways: by assuming that Plutarch's account of Dorylaus' death is false;<sup>44</sup> by making a distinction between Strabo's Dorylaus the Younger and the Dorylaus "the General" of Appian and Plutarch;<sup>45</sup> by ignoring the Dorylaus of Plutarch's *Lucullus* altogether;<sup>46</sup> or, by assuming that Mithridates rehabilitated Dorylaus after his betrayal.<sup>47</sup> Some scholars acknowledge that Plutarch's story does not fit with Strabo's version of Dorylaus' desertion without choosing one account over the other.<sup>48</sup>

Splitting the figure of Dorylaus the Younger into two individuals is not a good solution. The inscription found on Delos ties together elegantly Strabo's account of Dorylaus as foster brother to Mithridates and the descriptions of

<sup>43</sup> *Lucullus* 17.3: ἐδέδοκτο μὲν οὖν μηκέτι μένειν ἐπεὶ δὲ προεξέπεμπον οἱ βασιλικοὶ τὰ σφέτερα χρήματα καθ' ἡσυχίαν, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους ἐκώλυον, ἤδη καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν ἐπὶ τὰς ἐξόδους ὠθοῦμενοι καὶ βιαζόμενοι τὰ μὲν χρήματα ἥρπαζον, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἀπέσφαττον. ὅπου καὶ Δορύλαος ὁ στρατηγός οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἔχων ἢ τὴν πορφύραν περὶ αὐτόν ἀπώλετο διὰ ταύτην. The purple robe was worn by members of the royal family; cf. Cassia 2000: 227, n. 46.

<sup>44</sup> *RE* s.v. Dorylaos no. 3; Magie 1975: 1212; Flacelière and Chambry 1972: 80, n. 1; Biffi 2010: 111.

<sup>45</sup> McGing 1986: 91, 93, n. 28, 126–127.

<sup>46</sup> Engels 1999: 18–21.

<sup>47</sup> Panichi 2005: 209, n. 33.

<sup>48</sup> Dueck 2000: 7; Cassia 2000; on her view, see below, 114.

his military activities in Memnon, Appian, and Plutarch. There is little reason to deny that they are the same individual. Secondly, Plutarch's account of the events at Cabeira cannot be dismissed easily. It fits better with the evidence from Appian and Memnon about Dorylaeus than Strabo's narrative. Further, Appian describes the stampede at Cabeira in some detail as well, and there is no contradiction with Plutarch's version. In Appian Eupator himself is knocked off his horse, but he is able to remount; no casualties are reported (*Mithridatic Wars* 81). We cannot say with certainty on which sources Plutarch relied for his account of the events of Cabeira, but Sallust may be a good candidate. In the letter from Eupator to Arsaces transmitted among the fragments of the *Historia* Eupator mentions his withdrawal from Cabeira to Armenia, so it is not unlikely that Sallust treated the episode in his narrative in some detail (*Historia* 4.69.15 Maurenbrecher). Plutarch explicitly cites Sallust elsewhere in *Lucullus* (11, 33).<sup>49</sup>

In response to the unresolved contradiction in the sources about Dorylaeus the Younger two scholars have recently hinted at the possibility of a different explanation. Margherita Cassia (2000: 228) weighs all the evidence about Dorylaeus the Younger, and concludes that Strabo's version aimed at highlighting both the family's strong Pontic roots and its "philoroman tendencies." Roller (2014: 4) goes a bit further when he writes that Dorylaeus' "revolutionary spirit may have been a family myth." He does not, however, explain how this family myth might have come about, or why Strabo would have chosen to repeat it.

It is likely that the suggestions of Cassia and particularly Roller are correct. Instead of discarding Plutarch's account of Cabeira or further increasing the number of Dorylaei in Strabo's family, we should reconsider Strabo's story about the Roman sympathies of Dorylaeus the Younger. In the broader framework of the history of Strabo's family this plot anchors the family's later Roman allegiances in the life story of what was probably their most prominent ancestor. The reason why Strabo gives no concrete information about the repercussions of the attempted desertion for Dorylaeus is that he was not caught and that there were no repercussions. Even if Dorylaeus secretly thought about defecting to the Romans, he did not put his plan into action. Alternatively, the first or second generation after Dorylaeus may have attributed an entirely invented plot to their ancestor. Strabo seemingly did not doubt its veracity, and decided to include it in his *Geography*, not once but twice.

Both instances of Strabo's story of Dorylaeus the Younger occur in the context of discussions of other ancestors. This fits well with the scenario that the story derived from tales told within the family. Stories rehearsed at family gatherings often take the form of an annotated family tree: a loosely chronological re-enactment of the family's history. The telling and retelling of such stories serve to carry on and hand down family traditions, and they contribute to practices of

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Flacelière and Chambry 1972: 49-51.

identity-making, particularly in times of crisis and change, when they can provide support and stability.<sup>50</sup> Strabo's parents and grandparents had to redefine their identity once their status at the Pontic court ceased to be valid social currency. I suggest that, as part of this redefinition, a back-story was invented to connect the family's new Roman ties to the life story of a worthy progenitor, Dorylaeus the Younger.

The strategy of anchoring a new social position is not driven by expediency or opportunism. While it has been shown that Strabo was careful in discussing recent events and took pains not to offend Tiberius,<sup>51</sup> there was no danger in being proud of one's Pontic roots. Admiration for Mithridates and blandishments towards Rome go hand in hand in Strabo.<sup>52</sup> It was in no way politically necessary to invent Roman allegiances going back three generations. Rather, the projection of Roman sympathies onto Dorylaeus the Younger, just like Strabo's use of the terms Pontus and Pontic for the Mithridatic court, is another example of anchoring: new, unfamiliar, and changing socio-cultural identities are imported into well-known stories of the past in order to make them seem familiar and natural, to others and to oneself.

#### CONCLUSION

I started this article by citing Katherine Clarke's work on the implicit presence of Strabo in his own text, and the author's threefold identity as a Greek scholar, a Pontic patriot, and a loyal Roman citizen. My aim was to show that Strabo inserts himself in particular into his account of Pontus and of his family's history. The immediacy of his "present" in the *Geography* became most clear in the author's tendency to make the Pontus sections reflect the universalizing thrust of his over-all literary project. The vicissitudes of the life of his country and his family encapsulate the changes that came with the expansion of the Roman *oikoumene*. In the context of these changes, the increasingly "philoroman" outlook of his ancestors is a recurring thread providing continuity.

Strabo chose to include the family story of the defection of Dorylaeus in his account (twice) precisely because it fits the pattern of the family's growing alignment with Roman interests. The story provided an opportunity for the author to connect his own incorporation into the Roman elite to the, possibly invented, deeds of an illustrious ancestor. Paradoxically, because of Dorylaeus' prominence in Pontus, the story of his defection also activates the family's Pontic pride, as it evokes their former royal ties.

<sup>50</sup> See Kiser *et al.* 2010 on the mechanics and benefits of family story-telling from the perspective of modern psychology.

<sup>51</sup> Pothecary 2002.

<sup>52</sup> Braund 2005: 233–234; cf. Cassia 2000.

Ultimately, Strabo's engagement with the recent history of his family and his home country is most interesting for what it reveals about recovery and self-preservation in the face of change. Stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, in a family context or individually, are key to the construction of communities and identities. This is why the embellished life story of Dorylaeus the Younger became an anchoring point for the self-understanding of a formerly quasi-royal Pontic family turned Roman elite. It was a story too good not to be true.

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